

Preacher returns from his road trip thinking he has found his purpose. Life, however, does not cooperate. He can not find that one person that needs his help. It takes a crime against society to show him his true path. Also see Preacher: Do Unto Others and Preacher: Thou Shall Not Lie.

Preacher: Eye Foe An Eye

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**Eye for an Eye**

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# **Eye for an Eye**

**V. Shurtz**



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This book is dedicated to:

Yvonne Marie (Rogers) Alexander 1934-2006  
She didn't have time to read this book on this earth;  
however, I'm sure God has a library.

And to:

James Lee Foster 1940-2005  
The man who named me Preacher.

Thank you both,  
V. Shurtz





The sound of an old '74 caught the herd's attention. The morning sun had yet to make its debut. Dew-laden clover amongst the knee-high pasture grass had held their attention for most of the night. A few of the bolder does sampled the roses bordering the sidewalk that led up to the double-wide mobile home nestled amongst the trees. A three-point buck, still in velvet, stomped his front foot at the interruption.

The herd had gotten used to the two bikers who lived in the mobile. Over the past month, the two humans hadn't bothered them at all. They seemed content to work during the day and watch the deer at sunset. The herd came back almost every evening to drink from the clear cold stream that bisected the half-mile wide pasture.

This morning the bikers were leaving with the sun. The buck didn't care where they were going. He only wanted a few more mouthfuls of the moist fodder before he bedded down for the day.

The Kid still marveled at the view from Preacher's front yard. Sometimes he would just sit and watch as the small herd of black tail deer migrated across the pasture in the evening.

The Kid had followed Preacher from the high sagebrush-choked flats of Utah, Colorado, and Wyoming, to this paradise of tall trees and green grass in northern California. He still could not believe that fifty miles to the west the Pacific Ocean awaited him. One hour to the east, the rich brown alluvial soil of the Central Valley awaited his pleasure.

It is said that the Central Valley produces everything from almonds and rice to alfalfa and onions. He had read that California is the largest agricultural state in the U.S.A., producing over three hundred commodities. It didn't make them any cheaper, but they were fresher. The Kid had gotten into the habit of eating fresh fruit with his oatmeal in the morning.

Today the Kid and Preacher would ride east to meet with the building department and hopefully return with the permits necessary to begin the construction of a new building. They would call it the "Clubhouse." Preacher pulled up alongside the

Kid. Together they looked out over the pasture in front of them. The Kid looked sideways at him.

“Preacher, if this isn’t paradise, I don’t know what is.”

Preacher nodded. “That’s what my father thought when he bought it.” After a moment’s pause, he continued. “Well, Kid, let’s get going.”

The Kid nodded. “Lead the way.”

Preacher had picked up the Kid in Salt Lake City. The Kid had asked if he could ride with him. Now, almost two months later, the Kid had become the little brother Preacher never had. As the days had gone by, the Kid’s respect for Preacher had increased.

Upon their arrival at Preacher’s home, they had begun laying out the building that Preacher wanted to build. He had promised the Kid a job and a place to live. He hired him as a construction laborer, and was letting him stay in his home until the Clubhouse could be built. The Kid and Preacher would pour the footings and slab, erect the building itself, and roof it. Subcontractors would do the electrical and plumbing.

The Kid didn’t know where Preacher got his money. He didn’t ask, but he knew that Preacher must have money. Preacher didn’t flaunt it, though. He was the same man as before windfall had come his way. He still rode his luminous black ‘71 FLH—he called her his “old girl.” He still ate oatmeal for breakfast. He always checked prices at the store. He always haggled with subcontractors over their bid on any phase of the building.

Preacher worked as hard as he rode, and today, he planned on making a day out of going to town. First stop, the building department. Second stop, the home of a Brother.

The deer didn’t flee from the sound of the two bikes. They had gotten used to the sound. Instead, they watched as the two warriors on their black steeds of steel turned right at the gate and rolled back their throttles. The herd resumed eating before the echo of their departure faded.

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*Eye for an Eye*

Preacher left the Kid outside with the bikes when he entered the building department. It's not that he didn't trust the people in town; he didn't trust people in general. He left the Kid with the bikes because one biker in a public building was enough. Two would make the employees nervous. Preacher didn't want any hassles. All he wanted to do was build a building. Enough obstacles would present themselves on their own.

"Preacher, why even bother with permits? You live so far out no one would even know," the Kid asked.

Preacher explained that although they lived out of the way, somebody would say something to somebody, and the building inspectors would show up. That meant fines, penalties, and hassles he didn't want to deal with.

"Kid, sometimes it's easier to abide by the rules. The last thing we want is someone watching us. They do that already. Let's not give them anything to bitch about."

An hour went by before Preacher exited the building. He wasn't smiling. "They have to approve the plans" was all he said as he mounted his old girl.

Preacher headed north on the freeway. Apache lived some fifty miles in that direction.

\* \* \* \* \*

Apache sat in his garage, working on a friend's bike when he heard Preacher and the Kid pull in. Smiling, he stood to greet his Brother and the Kid.

"Where the fuck have you been for the last couple of weeks?" Apache asked.

Preacher shook his head. "We've been laying out the Clubhouse and getting bids from subcontractors."

Apache nodded. "Okay, but why haven't you been around? You missed the poker run last weekend."

Preacher looked at him. "You have a phone don't you?" he asked.

Apache smiled. "Yeah."

“Then you should have called. I didn’t know we had a run last weekend.”

Apache frowned. “Is it my responsibility to keep you up to date? Didn’t you get the flyer?”

Preacher shook his head. “Yes and no.”

Apache looked sideways at Preacher. “What do you mean, yes and no?”

Preacher smiled. “Yes, it’s your responsibility, and no, I didn’t get the flyer.”

Apache flung his hands in the air. “I don’t know where all you guys get the idea that I’m responsible for getting out the flyers. All I’m supposed to do is make them up. Betty is responsible for mailing them!”

Preacher laughed. He was used to Apache’s antics. He always made everything a big drama.

Preacher had met Apache more than ten years ago. They had an immediate liking for each other. Apache would always ride with him. He didn’t care where or when; he would always ride. They shared other things in common as well. Apache didn’t drink; he didn’t have kids, and he liked the solitude of the mountains.

“Another thing,” Apache continued, “you didn’t show up at the monthly meeting either. Where in the hell have you been?”

Preacher nodded. Now he knew what had upset him.

“Well, Pilgrim,” Preacher said in his best John Wayne voice, “I must have gotten sidetracked.”

“You’re damn straight you got sidetracked. You leave on your little road trip, without asking me to go, you come home and invite me out for one barbecue, then disappear! No calls, no stopping by, no nothing. What’s up with that?”

Smiling, Preacher looked over at the Kid. “See what I have to put up with?”

The Kid nodded. “Yup, it’s pretty bad when your Brothers don’t know where you’re at.”

Apache started again. “See, I told you; the Kid understands. Why weren’t you at the meeting? I told everybody you had a new

*Eye for an Eye*

hang-around, and they wanted to meet him. I felt like an idiot when you didn't show!"

Preacher held up his hands, palms out. "Okay, okay, I'm here now. Do you have any iced tea?"

Apache looked at Preacher for a moment. "Fuck you, Preacher." He shook his head. "The tea's in the fridge, help yourself."

The Kid first met Apache on his trip out to California from Utah. Apache had stayed the night in their motel room in Klamath Falls. The second time he saw him had been at Preacher's barbecue. They had teamed up as partners for horseshoes. They had won.

The Kid walked over to the bike Apache was working on. "Need some help?" the Kid asked.

Apache shook his head. "No, but next month make sure he makes the meeting."

The Kid grinned. "What meeting?"

Apache looked up at the Kid. "The UBNC has its monthly meeting the first week of the month. That's what meeting."

The Kid nodded. "I'll remind him."

"You do that," Apache responded.

\* \* \* \* \*

Preacher and the Kid stayed with Apache for a couple of hours before they left. They didn't go home the same way they had come to town. Preacher took an alternate route.

The Kid didn't know the country around the upper valley. This route was actually shorter, but it took longer. Preacher stopped to point out landmarks. He showed him a lake here, a mountain there, a small town that split the routes, and the back way into his valley.

"You'll need to know these roads later on, so pay attention."

The Kid did pay attention. Later that evening, Preacher pulled out a map and retraced their route with a pencil. He also showed him some scenic routes of interest. "These aren't fast; they're for

fun.” As Preacher folded the map, he said, “Want to go for a ride tomorrow?”

The Kid grinned. “Yup.”

Preacher nodded. “Good, we’ll go back the same way we came—up to where the highway splits. Then, I want you to show me how to get on the other side of Mt. Shasta.”

The Kid thought for a moment. “Where do you want to end up?” he asked.

Preacher smiled. “If you take the road I showed you, it only goes to one place. That’s where I want to end up.”

The Kid smiled. “The scenic route up Highway 3.”

Preacher nodded. “That’s the one.”

The Kid nodded. “I can do that.”

“Good,” Preacher stated. “We leave at sunrise.”

The Kid laughed. “Of course.”

Preacher called Apache.

\* \* \* \* \*

Preacher stood wiping his old girl down when the Kid wandered into the shop.

“Preacher, when’s the next run?”

Preacher smiled. “Ask Apache tomorrow. He’ll know.”

The Kid nodded. “That works.”

“Why?” Preacher asked.

The Kid chuckled. “I’m in the mood for some female company.”

Preacher chuckled. “Okay, maybe you’ll get lucky.”

The Kid smiled. “If not, I may have to go downtown.”

Preacher nodded. “If you do go downtown, get a motel. I don’t want you hauling her out here. God only knows how long she’ll want to stay.”

The Kid laughed. “I won’t bring her back; I’ll just put her on her back.”

Preacher laughed.

*Eye for an Eye*

\* \* \* \* \*

Later that night, Preacher started thinking about the woman he had stayed with in central Nevada. She was a special woman. They had only spent a week together, but a lot had happened during that week. She knew the biker lifestyle. She knew what it was like to be alone.

Preacher had helped when her mother passed away, but he had yet to offer his condolences. He smiled as he rummaged around the house, looking for her number. It wasn't on the counter; it wasn't on the dresser. Where had he put it? Finally he looked in the side pouch of his pack. There it was, folded up in a matchbook—name, phone number, and birthday.

He smiled, remembering their last day together: the party, the fight, and her good-bye. As he looked down at the matchbook, he noticed the date of her birthday. It was coming up. As a matter of fact, he checked the calendar, and it was in ten days. He smiled. He had told her he would return before the snow flew. He would be there for her birthday.

"Kid," he hollered, "got a minute?"

The Kid wandered into the kitchen. "Yeah, what's up?"

Preacher smiled. "Want to go for a ride?"

The Kid grinned. "I thought we were."

"We are, tomorrow. I'm talking about next week."

The Kid shrugged. "Okay, I'll go."

"Good," Preacher said. "We'll leave next Thursday morning and plan on being back Sunday. Monday is when we can see about our permit."

The Kid smiled. "Can I ask where we're going?"

Preacher nodded. "Yup, you can ask. Central Nevada—we have a birthday party to attend."

The Kid nodded. "That'll work; anything else?"

"No," replied Preacher.

The Kid nodded. "Okay, I'm going to bed. See ya in the morning."



Preacher picked up the phone. He had to make a call. The man Preacher called went by the name of Hank. Preacher didn't know if it was his given name or not. He didn't care. His own given name wasn't Preacher.

Hank was the grandfather of a small, but spirited boy named Josh. Hank owned the only gas station in Ely, Nevada. Preacher had stayed to run his station when Hank rushed his daughter, Josh's mother, to Reno after Josh had been airlifted to a hospital there. He hoped Hank would still be up.

The phone rang; it rang again. On the third ring, Hank answered.

"Hello," said Hank.

"Hey, old man, how's Josh?"

Surprised by the voice on the other end, Hank replied, "Preacher, Preacher is that you?"

Preacher chuckled. "Yup."

"Well, I'll be damned," Hank replied.

Hank proceeded to fill Preacher in on all the tree gossip. He told him about Josh. He told him about all the "real" bikers they had helped. He told him about the mysterious man who had paid for all the hospital expenses. He told him about Maggie's mother. She had passed away. Hank paused. "Have you talked to Maggie yet?"

Preacher chuckled. "Nope, that's why I called you." Preacher paused. "Hank, I need your word that you won't say anything to anybody—and I mean anybody—about what I'm going to say."

Hank paused. "Okay, you have my word. I won't say anything to anybody. Is it serious?"

Preacher chuckled. "No, it's nothing bad." He paused. "Is Maggie still doing her Thursday night specials?"

"Yes, yes she is. Why?"

"Is she going to have one next Thursday?" Preacher could almost see Hank smile.

"Yes, it's her birthday. She's having fried chicken."

Preacher smiled. He remembered her fried chicken. "Good, I'll be there."

*Eye for an Eye*

“What!” shouted Hank. “You’re going to be here for her birthday?”

“Yup.”

“Wait till I tell...” Hank stopped.

“Your word, Hank,” Preacher warned.

“Damn you, Preacher.” Hank paused.

“Alright, my word. When are you going to show up?”

Preacher chuckled. “Thursday.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Dawn came to their valley clean and cool. The knee-high grass bent under the weight of heavy dew. The Kid stood on the deck, watching the small herd of deer that called the meadow home. When the three-point buck looked up to watch him, the Kid saluted him with his teacup. The buck shook his head and blew before he resumed eating the succulent forbs and grasses.

Today Preacher would show the Kid some new territory. All the places Preacher showed him in this part of California, seemed full of tall fir trees, live oak, and cedar trees. Every trip was a new adventure. Today the Kid would lead the way. Apache would meet them at the rest stop before the junction.

Preacher strolled out on the deck. “Well, Kid, are you ready?”

The Kid nodded. He had learned to always be ready, or Preacher would leave him behind.

“I’m always ready!”

Preacher nodded. “Good.” He paused. “We’ll meet Apache about ten or so, then head up Highway 3.” He paused. “We’ll be gone most of the day.”

The Kid smiled. “Okay.”

“‘Okay?’ Is that all you have to say?”

The Kid chuckled. “Yup.”

Smiling, Preacher looked at the Kid. “Then lead the way.”

The Kid nodded. “You got it.”

The Kid set a fast pace over the mountain. When they reached the rest area, Apache stood waiting. "About time you two slackers showed up. What did you do? Sleep in?"

The Kid laughed. "Sleep in? He's been up since five. I've been up since five-thirty. We wanted to let you sleep. We know you need *your* beauty sleep."

Apache grinned. "Me? Need beauty sleep? I'm the best looking one here."

Preacher chuckled. "If you two are through admiring each other, I'd like to get going. I want to be home before midnight. Kid, let's go."

The three black leather-clad bikers, with their hands held high on Ape Hangers, started up Highway 3 going north. The Kid had ridden with Apache and Preacher before. He knew enough to stop at the vistas when they came up. Apache called them ED breaks. The Kid enjoyed the view.

Preacher stayed back for the most part. He wanted the Kid and Apache to get used to riding with each other. The plan that had been forming in his mind included them riding together. He watched as they toyed for the lead. He laughed when Apache challenged the Kid. About two hours into the ride, Apache took the lead.

The Kid followed like a hound chasing a rabbit. If the Kid chose to ride on any of the Hells Angel's runs, he would have to learn to ride fast at close quarters. Preacher knew that the Kid still had a lot to learn, but he was a quick study.

Within a few months, Preacher would have the Kid representing him at some of the runs. Playing with Apache would teach him what he had to learn. Apache always rode hard. Apache pulled over before they connected up with the freeway.

"Kid, you and I need to ride together more often. I know what Preacher would do if a situation came up, but I don't know what you're going to do. A couple of times I thought we might touch when we went around sharp corners."

The Kid nodded. "I'll ride with you anytime you want, if Preacher will let me have a day off."

Preacher strolled up behind them. "As long as the work's done, I don't care who you ride with. Just remember, until you're accepted, you're riding on my name."

"That works for me," replied the Kid.

Apache grinned. "I'm glad you said that, Preacher; I want the Kid to ride with me this weekend. I need to go to Sacramento."

"Kid's choice," Preacher said. "I need to stay home. Daymond and I have a few things to go over."

The Kid grinned. "I'll ride with you, Apache. Just tell me when and where."

Apache nodded. "Come over to my place tomorrow. You can spend the night. We'll leave at sunrise."

The Kid laughed. He motioned toward Preacher. "You've been hanging around him too long. Leave at sunrise? Don't you guys ever leave at ten, or maybe noon?"

Preacher and Apache stood quietly with sober faces. Apache spoke first. "Kid, you're riding with *me*. I'm not riding with *you*; we leave at sunrise."

The Kid realized his mistake too late. Apache and Preacher turned and walked away.

Damn it, he thought to himself, keep your mouth shut.

Apache and Preacher rode side by side down I-5. The Kid followed. When they pulled up into Apache's driveway, Preacher asked, "Kid, what exit did we take?"

The Kid's face went blank. He hadn't noticed. "I'm not sure," replied the Kid.

Apache looked over at Preacher. "I thought the reason for today's putt was to let the Kid learn the roads."

Preacher, still looking at the Kid, answered, "It was."

Apache shook his head. "How are you going to know where to exit tomorrow? Damn it, Kid, pay attention."

The Kid sat on his bike dejected. He said nothing. Two mistakes in two hours, he thought to himself. "Kid, pay attention" rang in his ears.

Preacher and the Kid left Apache standing in his driveway. As they entered the on-ramp, the Kid looked over at the off-ramp. A

stately old oak tree stood behind the exit sign. Now he knew where to exit tomorrow. He wouldn't forget his lessons for the day, he hoped.

\* \* \* \* \*

Later that evening, Preacher and the Kid sat on the front porch. The Kid had been quiet all evening. Apache had been hard on the Kid today. Apache had a good heart, but he didn't put up with much bullshit from someone new. The Kid might be riding with Preacher, but he was still the new kid on the block. All of Preacher's Brothers would test his mud. A smart mouth or stupid behavior would earn the Kid a fat lip. The Kid needed to learn self-control. Preacher decided the time had come to broach the subject.

"Kid, Apache was hard on you today for a reason. He likes you and wants you to be accepted. The only way our Brothers will accept you is if you're respectful. Once they get to know you, they might ask for your opinion. Until they do, don't offer one. Follow Apache's lead. Go where he goes, and do what he tells you. Some of the people in Sacramento don't like outsiders. You're an outsider. They will allow you in because you're with Apache. Don't embarrass him."

Preacher paused. "You have the heart to be a good biker. You're always willing to ride, and for the most part you're respectful. Today you questioned Apache's judgment." Preacher looked over at the Kid. "Remember Pocatello?"

The Kid nodded.

Preacher continued. "Apache won't take you on a twelve-hour ride. He'll leave you. If you're alone with him, he'll take some teasing. If you're with company, he will discipline you. Mind your manners. If you don't, I'll discipline you—understand?"

The Kid nodded. "I thought Apache and I were friends."

Preacher nodded. "He is your friend. At the rest stop when you teased him, he responded as a friend. When you questioned him about when to leave, you challenged him. He will not put up

*Eye for an Eye*

with that. Nobody likes to be told what to do. Nobody likes their judgment questioned. To have a friend you must be a friend. Apache is a good friend to have. He'll be there for you every time. If you want to be his friend, you have to prove to him that you won't embarrass him and that you'll back his judgment even if you disagree. That's what any brotherhood is all about. If you're looking out for his best interest and he's looking out for yours, that's a friendship. Brothers are forever friends."

The Kid sat back. "I didn't know there were so many rules to being accepted. I always thought that as long as you rode, people would accept you. Now I find out there's always rules. I can understand rules if you're a patch holder, but I didn't think an independent had so many rules."

Preacher nodded. "Sometimes being an independent has more rules than being a club member. You have to know how to act when you're an independent riding with a club; however, as an independent you don't have to ride if you don't want to. As a club member you do. Go with Apache and learn. Watch what he does and how he does it. He may act like he doesn't care, but he's always paying attention to his surroundings. That, my young friend, is what he'll teach you—pay attention."

The Kid nodded. "I'll try."

Preacher nodded. "Every time you want to open your mouth, remember, it's always better to be thought the fool, than to open your mouth..."

The Kid finished the saying. "...and prove it."

Preacher stood up. "Kid, I think you'll make it."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Daymond, we need a website."

"Preacher, you'll have everybody and their dog wanting your help. I don't think a website is the answer."

Rose had been listening to the two of them going back and forth all morning long. Preacher had arrived at the house early. Preacher always arrived early; it was his way. Preacher had

hired Daymond as a lawyer to help him with his construction business. After the loss of Preacher's daughter and the divorce that had followed, they had become closer than the mere client/lawyer relationship. They called upon each other as a brother would.

As a last act of defiance, Preacher had purchased a super lotto ticket the day he walked out of divorce court. It had netted him 24 million dollars. Daymond had helped put the money to work.

Now Daymond worked primarily for Preacher. Daymond handled his investments. After the money had been put away and working, Preacher had gone for a ride. He was looking for something to put meaning back into his life. He had lost everything that really mattered.

People had told him to start over. "Keep building houses," they said. Preacher had refused. He felt a responsibility to himself to do something more. But most people couldn't understand Preacher. He thought differently than most people. Money wasn't his priority.

"Daymond, we need a way for people to get ahold of us."

Daymond sat back. "Preacher, you did quite a job all by yourself, without a website."

Rose stepped around the corner. "Preacher, how many people do you know who you would call 'Brother?'"

Preacher looked up. "I don't know—a few. Why?"

Rose smiled. "Would you help them if they asked?"

Preacher laughed. "Of course."

Rose continued. "Would you trust them not to take advantage of your position?"

Preacher sat up. He had been led by Rose before. He recognized her doing it now. "Yes."

Rose grinned. "You do call them your 'network of Brothers,' don't you?"

Preacher could feel her closing in. "Yes," he said tentatively.

*Eye for an Eye*

Rose beamed. "Then use them as your website. Let them tell you when a problem exists. Then all you would have to do is help them help others."

Daymond thought for a moment. "We would have to put some parameters on it, but it could work."

Preacher nodded. "No okie-dokes."

Daymond nodded. "Yeah, help only the people like the kid you helped in Nevada. His mom didn't have any insurance. Or when you helped Maggie with her mom's funeral."

Preacher nodded. "Only the ones who really need it. Not some dirt bag looking for a free ride."

Daymond nodded.

"I like it," Preacher said.

"All you would have to do is ride with your Brothers. I could handle the rest."

Preacher smiled. "You mean to tell me that all I would have to do is ride all over hell and back, and you would handle the rest?"

Daymond smiled. "Yeah, every time you identify a problem, I can ride out and fix it."

Preacher laughed. "I think we need to put a little more thought into it than that. It can't be that simple."

Daymond shrugged. "I don't know about that. Sometimes the simple solution is the best solution."

Rose laughed. "Why don't you two go for a ride? That's when you both think the best. I'll have dinner ready when you get back."

Daymond looked up. "Honey, it's only eleven in the morning."

Rose smiled. "I know."

Preacher stood up. "I think it's a good idea."

Rose grinned. "Daymond, do you remember the little liquor store up north that has the wine I like?"

Daymond smiled. "Yes."

"I think it might go good with our dinner. Would you mind?"

Daymond stood up. "Your wish is my command. Come on, Preacher, the lady wants wine."



Preacher started for the door. "If that's what the lady wants, that's what she'll get."

Daymond smiled at his wife. "We'll see you around six."

Rose nodded. "I'll be waiting."

\* \* \* \* \*

Maggie enjoyed a good sunset. The crimson of the clouds, the silhouette of the distant mountains, the cool desert breeze after another warm day. Today had been her day off. Maggie owned the only diner in Ely, Nevada. Her mother had given her the responsibility when her own health had started to fail. Running the diner and tending to her ailing mother had always kept her busy. Now, with her mother gone, she found herself looking for things to do. Today she had cleaned not only her small apartment behind the diner, but also the diner.

She poured herself a small glass of wine and retired to the huge oak tree across the street in front of Hank's station. In years past, Hank had built a bench around the tree. Most of the locals enjoyed the bench in the shade as they gossiped about their fellow residents. Tonight, however, Maggie sat alone. The sunset was gorgeous.

Maggie found herself alone a lot lately. Tina, the friend who helped her run the diner, had recently been married. She had a family to take care of. Maggie had only herself. Maggie didn't mind being alone, much, but lately she had been lonely. In times past she would go into Fallon to dance. She would spend the night and then come home. That was before she met Preacher. Now she waited for him to return.

Maggie was a good-looking woman. She worked at it. She watched what and how much she ate, and she worked hard. She stood about five-foot seven with a small waist and long legs. Her dark red hair accented the cream colored skin of her face. She had a perky little nose and green eyes that flashed fire when she was upset. Preacher had promised that he would return before the snow flew, if he could. She had vowed to wait.

Thursday would be her birthday. Preacher had sent postcards from time to time. The last one she received came from the Redwoods of northern California. Preacher lived in northern California. She wondered if he would send her a card for her birthday.

The sound of footsteps on gravel caught her attention. She turned only to find Hank wandering up to the tree. She smiled. "Hank, you old fart. What are you doing out here? I thought you'd be watching your TV show."

Hank shoved his hands into his pockets, a common practice before speaking. "I saw you wander over here, and I thought I'd come join you."

Maggie nodded. "Then park yourself here beside me, and let's talk dirty."

Hank smiled. "I'm too old to even think dirty, much less talk dirty. Now if I was younger, I'd give Preacher a run for his money."

Maggie chuckled. "I'll just bet you would. Have a seat." She sipped her wine.

Hank sat down. "I've noticed you're spending more and more time out here in the evenings. Any special reason?"

Maggie stared off into the sunset. "He smoked out here every night. Sometimes when I sit out here, I can almost feel him."

Hank chuckled. "Well, he said he'd come back before it snowed, but that might be awhile."

Maggie looked down into her wine glass. Softly she replied, "I know."

Hank looked over at her. "Where was the last postcard from?"

Maggie smiled. "Northern California—the Redwoods. He's home by now."

Hank sat back. He knew Maggie well enough to know that she normally didn't open up and talk, so he led the way. "When you chose to wait for him, you knew it might be awhile before he came back."

Maggie nodded. She sat up straight. "Yup, I did. The man is a biker. He belongs to the road. Nobody will ever change him. I

knew who and what he was when I chose him,” she sighed, “but I sure could use him now.” She slumped back against the tree. “Thursday is my birthday. When I gave him his list of dates and addresses, I included my birthday. He’d better at least send me card.”

Hank sat silent for a moment. “And if he doesn’t?”

Maggie turned her head without lifting it off the tree. “Then I’ll discipline him.”

Hank chuckled. “You’ll discipline him? I don’t think anybody could discipline him.”

Maggie looked back at the sunset. The night was getting darker. “Whatever.” She paused. “I could still use a card or something.”

Hank nodded. “Be careful what you wish for; you might get it.”

Maggie looked over at Hank. “Do you know something that I don’t?”

Hank smiled. “Maggie, I didn’t spend all that much time with Preacher; I wouldn’t have a clue as to what he might do. I’m just saying, don’t get your hopes up. It’s not snowing.”

She looked at the horizon. Softly she replied, “I know.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Apache and the Kid returned Sunday evening. Preacher sat on the front deck, smoking, when they arrived. He could hear them laughing as they opened up the gate. He smiled knowing that the Kid had had a good time. Apache liked to have fun. Riding with him was always an experience. Going into a bar with him could be another kind of experience. Preacher watched as they both rolled back their throttles and raced up the gravel driveway. They came to a halt in a cloud of dust. Apache took off his helmet before he spoke. Waving his gloved hand to clear the dust, he laughed.

“Kid, the next time I take the lead home. You’re crazy.”

*Eye for an Eye*

The Kid took off his helmet. "What do you mean I'm crazy? It wasn't me who almost got us in a fight. You did that all by yourself."

Apache laughed. "That big guy, the one with the green teeth, I thought we were going to have to kill him to get out of there."

The Kid smiled. "That thing about his truck is what did it. We could have been in trouble."

Apache crawled off his bike. "Ah, you win some, you lose some. Some people just don't like to play fair." He looked up at Preacher. "I'll say one thing for the Kid: he'll back you up when the time comes."

Preacher chuckled. "I thought I heard the Kid say you almost got into a fight."

"You did," Apache responded. "I was on a roll, and this big guy got upset. When the Kid stood up, everybody decided maybe a fight wasn't such a good idea."

The Kid walked up onto the porch. He started unzipping and unbuckling his leathers.

Preacher nodded. "So, you had a good time then?"

The Kid nodded. "Yeah, it was fun. The poker run up the canyon was fun, and the party after rocked."

Apache strolled up. "Rocked? Is that what you said?"

The Kid smiled. "Yeah, rocked."

Apache shook his bald head. "I didn't see you rocking too much. You were off with that little thing on the Sportster."

The Kid laughed. "Yeah, she rocked."

Apache rubbed his chin. "Is that what you call it now? Rocking?"

The Kid exploded with laughter. "Yeah, she helped me get my rocks off."

Apache and Preacher laughed. Apache plopped down in a chair. "Preacher, is there anything in there to eat? I am starving."

The Kid looked up. "Me too."

Preacher nodded. "Go make yourself a sandwich. There's meat, cheese, and bread. Have at it."

Apache pushed himself up out of the chair. "Can I spend the night?"

Preacher smiled. "You know where the couch is."

"Thanks, Preacher," he said as he disappeared into the house.

\* \* \* \* \*

Later, after Apache showered, he found Preacher in the family room at his desk. Apache no longer wore the attire of a biker. With his heavily muscled body, he looked more like a body builder. He wore only workout shorts and socks. He plopped down onto the couch that he would call his bed tonight.

"Everybody asked about you," he said.

Without looking up, Preacher responded. "What were they asking?"

Apache shrugged. "Why you weren't there. Why you sent the Kid, things like that."

Preacher looked sideways at his old friend. "What did you tell them?"

Apache sat back. "That you were obligated elsewhere. I thought that was the best answer without lying."

Preacher nodded. "Thanks."

Apache smiled. "Why weren't you there?"

Preacher sat back. "Daymond and I spent the whole day getting Rose wine."

"She is a good cook, but why weren't you with us? Some of our friends were disappointed."

Preacher stared at Apache. "It's too bad they were disappointed, but what I accomplished this weekend, in my opinion, was more important."

"It was a charity ride, Preacher. They wanted your support."

Preacher shook his head in disappointment. "Apache, I've been afraid this would happen." He paused. "I'll go on as many runs as I can; I'll help where I can, but nobody owns me. I still go

where I want, when I want. Nobody should expect any more out of me now, than they did before I had money.”

Apache nodded. “You’re right; they shouldn’t, but they do. Before you had money, whatever money you took on a run, you spent at the run. You supported everybody. Nobody has seen you since you came back from your road trip. They were expecting you. I show up with the Kid, someone you brought back with you, and they were disappointed. They felt like you let them down.”

Preacher sighed. “I’ll call and make my amends.”

Apache nodded. “They’re expecting you.” He looked up at the anguish on Preacher’s face. “So are you going to tell me what was so important that you couldn’t make the run?”

Preacher nodded. “Daymond and I were trying to spend all this money.” Preacher explained about the young man in Nevada whom he had helped. He explained about the old man in Green River. He explained about Suzie and Sam. He explained about the funeral expenses for Maggie’s mother.

“These are the types of things that I want to help people with. I want to help people anonymously.” He paused. “If we could help just one or two people a year who really need it, I’d be happy. Our problem is finding the one or two people. A website would have everybody wanting something. We need to find some way for our Brothers to help us find the one or two people who we could help.” He grinned. “Got any suggestions?”

Apache grunted. “I’ll sleep on it.”

Preacher had always been amazed at Apache’s ability to fall asleep anywhere, in any conditions. Apache pulled his feet up on the couch. He was asleep before Preacher could stand up.

Apache awoke to the smell of bacon. His stomach rumbled. He smiled. Swinging his legs off the couch, he noticed that the sun was up and had been for a while. He rubbed his hands over his bald head.

“Whoever is doing the cooking, I like my bacon crisp and my eggs over easy.”

He heard the Kid laugh. "It's a good thing I'm cooking. If Preacher was still here, you'd have oatmeal."

Apache ambled into the kitchen. "Where's Preacher? I didn't hear his bike leave."

The Kid looked up. "One egg or two?"

Apache nodded. "Two."

The Kid turned his attention back to the iron skillet. "He left this morning with the guy who's going to dig the footings for the Clubhouse."

Apache sat down at the table. "Kid, do you know what he's doing?"

The Kid shook his head. "No, all I know is that he wants to build a Clubhouse where his Brothers can stay when they stop by. He told me once that somebody named Darrell wanted his own cabin when he comes."

Apache smiled. "Have you ever met Darrell?"

The Kid flipped the eggs. "Nope; I met George, and I already knew Dale. Darrell is a new one."

Apache grinned. "Darrell has known Preacher longer than I have. He's a good Brother. Tall and skinny, but a good Brother. He spends a lot of time with George and Critter."

The Kid slipped the two eggs on a plate. "Who's Critter?" he asked as he handed the eggs and bacon over to Apache.

"Critter is a patch holder from Vegas. Preacher, George, Darrell, and Critter came up together; they were mentored by a guy named Doyle. Doyle was Dale's predecessor. Have any toast?"

The Kid handed Apache two golden brown slices. He leaned back against the counter. "If all his Brothers come at once, we'll need another Clubhouse. We're only building five bedrooms with a common kitchen."

Apache looked sideways at the Kid. "Where are you going to stay? Here?"

The Kid shook his head. "No, we're building me an apartment on the second floor."

*Eye for an Eye*

Apache shook his head. "Do you know how fortunate you are?"

The Kid nodded. "Yes, I do. He's given me the life I wanted to live, a job, and a place to live."

Apache nodded. "He'll ask you for something someday."

The Kid nodded. "And I'll deliver. I owe him."

Apache resumed eating without saying another word.

The Kid served himself. He sat down across from Apache. "What do you owe him?" the Kid asked.

Apache looked up. "My life."

The Kid nodded as he proceeded to consume his breakfast.

\* \* \* \* \*

Preacher returned to find the two of them out in the shop. The Kid was checking his bike over after the weekend run. Apache stood packed and ready to go home.

"My, my," he said as he strolled into the shop, "look who finally got up."

Apache flipped him off. The Kid grinned.

"Kid, check that primary belt; it looks like it's moved," Apache said.

"Okay," the Kid replied.

Preacher looked over at the Kid. "Check it over good. The ride to Nevada will be a hot one this time of year."

The Kid nodded. "You got it."

Apache looked over at Preacher. "Nevada? Why are you going to Nevada?"

Preacher grinned. "A birthday party."

Apache grinned. "A birthday party? Anybody I know?"

Preacher nodded. "You met her once."

Apache laughed. "Ah, that one?"

Preacher smiled. "That one."

Apache smiled, remembering the redhead he'd met. "When are you leaving?"

"Thursday," replied Preacher.



Apache nodded. "Coming home Sunday?"

"Yup," replied Preacher.

Apache chuckled. "Kid, take some rope. After a few days with that woman, he'll be too sore to shift."

The Kid jumped up. "Rope" was all he said.

Preacher and Apache watched as the Kid scoured the shop looking for something.

Apache asked. "Kid, what are you looking for?"

"Rope," he replied. "Preacher had some rope in his saddlebags when we pulled Marty home. I need some for my saddlebags."

Apache laughed. "Always be prepared. Kid, it's in the tool room, on the wall."

The Kid turned. "Thanks," he said as he headed toward the tool room.

Apache looked over at Preacher. "Tell the redhead I said hi."

Preacher smiled. "I will."

Apache started toward his bike. "Kid," he hollered, "I'll see ya next week." He looked sideways at Preacher. "The three of us have a run to attend."

The Kid stuck his head out of the tool room. "Okay."

Apache looked back at Preacher. Preacher nodded. "We'll be there."

Apache nodded. "Good."

\* \* \* \* \*

Maggie awoke before the sun. Stars still sparkled against a black sky. Today would be an interesting one. It was her birthday. She would stay busy today. Staying busy kept her from thinking about the man she waited for—Preacher.

Tina had called, offering to come into town early to help make the preparations necessary for the party she would have this evening. Maggie refused her offer. "Tina, stay home with your family. I need to stay busy today anyway."

*Eye for an Eye*

Maggie stood at the front windows of the diner, looking across the street at Hank's station. The same station Preacher had stayed in when he had first arrived. She slept with him for the first time in the back room of that station. She smiled at the memory of the small, squeaky old bed. She moaned to herself when she remembered that the word "slept" wasn't the word for the aerobics they had performed that night.

*Maggie's Diner* looked like something out of a fifties movie. The long, gleaming white counter with its pedestal stools, the Formica tables against the wall with the red and white checkered tablecloths, the booths that occupied the area under the front windows where she now stood.

She shivered at the thoughts that had been flowing through her mind. She had to get busy. If she didn't, she would either get mad at the world or cry. She needed her man.

"Okay, Maggie," she spoke to herself, "get busy. You have coffee to make and biscuits to bake. Let's get going."

\* \* \* \* \*

Preacher sat astride his old girl. The Kid sat on his bike alongside. Both engines idled with the heartbeat throb of an old '74. They had eight hours to ride before they could stop and party. Preacher said it was going to be a birthday party. The Kid liked parties. The Kid also liked to ride. Today was a good day. He could ride to a party. He smiled in anticipation.

Preacher looked over at the Kid. He nodded. One click down and Preacher released the clutch. His old girl jumped forward. The Kid followed. The sun still hid below the horizon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hank wandered out his back door, following the path that led up to the back door of his station. He remembered Preacher standing at that door. He would sip his tea while he watched the rabbits forage on Hank's lush green lawn. Hank nodded at the

rabbits as he strolled past them. Hank had wanted to tell Maggie that he had spoken to Preacher. She had been so despondent, but he had given his word to a friend.

Maggie had kept *her* word too. Not once since Preacher had left, had she gone to Fallon for a Saturday night. Hank chuckled to himself when he stopped at the spare bedroom he kept in the back of his station. Preacher won't need the use of that tonight, he thought. Hank looked around the station. It no longer sparkled as it had the day Preacher left. Clutter abounded on the workbench. The floor needed to be cleaned. Cleaning up would be his project for the day. He looked over at the tire rack. He would save the flat tires for Preacher. He started across the street toward *Maggie's Diner*. The lights were on.

Maggie heard the bell tinkle when Hank stepped through the front door. She looked up. "I'll be right with you, Hank. I need to get these biscuits in the oven."

"Don't worry about me, Maggie, I'm not in any hurry," replied Hank.

Hank watched Maggie as she bustled around her kitchen. He remembered when she used to wear a uniform to work. That was also before Preacher. The day he left, Maggie changed her attire. She no longer wore the uniform. She now dressed in tight jeans, an open collar blouse, and her ever present moccasins.

"Maggie, what would you say to having the party over at the station? There'll be more room for everybody."

Maggie glanced out the service window. "That'll be okay, if you think we'll need the room."

Hank smiled. "If half of the people show up who said they would, we'll need the room."

Maggie nodded. "Okay, set it up. I'll be over after lunch to help you. She started around the corner into the diner. "Do you want breakfast?" she asked Hank.

"No, coffee's fine."

Maggie poured two cups of the aromatic brew.

"Is that what you're going to do today? Set up for my party?" Maggie asked with a smile.

*Eye for an Eye*

Hank chuckled. "No, I'm going to clean up the shop."

Maggie set their cups on the counter. "You're going to clean up your shop?" Maggie asked with amazement. "What brought that on?"

Hank shrugged. "I don't know. I just feel like I should."

Maggie laughed. "Are you feeling well?" she asked. "The last time that shop was cleaned, it took Preacher a week to do it."

Hank smiled. "I'm not going to paint."

Maggie roared with laughter.

Tina arrived at her usual time. The morning crowd was smaller today. Frank and John discussed the weather. Roy and Gene discussed livestock. Tina promoted Maggie's party.

Tina had noticed a change in Maggie after her mother passed away. She seemed quieter, more thoughtful. She hoped Preacher had thought to send Maggie a birthday card. After Preacher left, Tina thought Maggie would forget him. She didn't. She held to him like a swimmer would hold onto a life preserver.

When the postcards started to arrive, Tina knew Maggie would wait for him. Tina also knew that Maggie didn't have all the money she needed to cover her mother's funeral expenses, yet she had managed it somehow. She didn't talk about it, but Tina noticed that her devotion to Preacher had increased. Today was her birthday. Preacher had better send her a card, or Tina would know the reason why, the next time she saw him. She stopped wiping the counter. *If* she saw him, she thought.

\* \* \* \* \*

Preacher and the Kid stopped in Susanville for gas.

\* \* \* \* \*

The lunch crowd dwindled earlier than usual. Everybody was preparing for Maggie's party. Maggie was preparing for her party. Chicken had to be fried, salads had to be made, and the cake needed icing.

“Tina, could you watch this place for a minute? I want to go over and talk to your dad.”

“Sure,” Tina replied.

Maggie sauntered into the first bay. Hank had a rag in both hands. He stood wiping down the workbench.

She laughed. “Hank, Preacher wiped them down with solvent.”

Hank looked back at Maggie. “Yeah, well, he’s not here. I’ll wipe them down the way I wipe them down.”

Maggie chuckled. “He’d be proud of you.” She looked around. “Where did you put all the stuff anyway?” she asked.

Hank opened up the lower cabinets. “Out of sight, out of mind.” A bolt rolled out on the floor.

Maggie laughed.

With a sweep of his arm, Hank said, “All I have left to do is sweep.”

Maggie nodded. “And set up for the party.”

Hank nodded. “And set up for the party.”

Maggie strolled up to the workbench. “Hank, could we set it up like we did for Josh’s coming home party? You know, around the tree?”

Hank smiled. “You bet we could. I already called Gene, and he’s going to bring some tables.”

“Good,” replied Maggie. “I’ll go over and start the chicken. We’ve only got a couple of hours until people start showing up.” She paused. “Hank, thank you.”

Hank beamed. “I want this to be your special day.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Two leather-clad warriors exited Highway 395 and entered Highway 80 going east out of Reno.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Eye for an Eye*

“Tina, could you help me with the cake? The icing should be warm enough to spread by now.”

“Sure,” Tina replied.

“Has the mail shown up yet?” Maggie asked from her prep table.

Tina strolled around the counter. “No, not yet.”

Tina saw Maggie shake her head. She thought to herself, Preacher, if she doesn’t get a card, I’ll kick your ass the next time I see you. Tina heard the bell above the door chime.

“Maggie,” Roy hollered, “Hank wants some butcher paper for the tables.”

Maggie motioned toward the back of the kitchen. “It’s over there. Take what you need.”

“Roy,” Tina called, “we’ll be needing you and Josh to carry some things over in about an hour.”

“Okay,” he said as he headed back out the door, carrying the white roll of paper.

\* \* \* \* \*

Preacher and the Kid stopped in Fallon at a major drug store.

\* \* \* \* \*

Maggie looked around the kitchen. What have I forgotten? she thought. She went down her mental list. The bell on the front door chimed. Maggie looked up.

The mailman dropped a small stack of letters on the counter. “Having a party?” he asked.

“Yup,” Tina replied as she sorted through the small stack of mail. No card.

“Fuck,” was all she said as she threw the stack back on the counter. She looked up to find Maggie watching her. She shook her head. Maggie smiled, but Tina could see the anguish in her face. A single tear escaped Maggie’s eye. She wiped it off with

her arm as she turned her back on Tina. Tina's eyes flashed fire. She stomped out the door.

Roy looked up from the tables. Tina was mad again. He wondered what could have set her off this time. She grabbed his arm as she walked by.

"That son-of-a-bitch didn't even bother to send her a card," she growled as she drug Roy toward the station. "Can you believe this? He couldn't even send her a card. What a piece of shit."

"Now, Tina," Roy started.

Tina took her stance. "Don't you 'now, Tina' me, Mister. Don't you fools know what a simple card can do for a woman?"

Roy said nothing. He knew better when she was in this mood.

Tina continued. "A simple little gesture, and he couldn't even be bothered. Doesn't he know that he just broke her heart? What an asshole."

Hank stepped out of the small bedroom in the back of the station.

"I wouldn't call him that to his face," he warned.

Tina spun around. "Fuck him! The next time I see the jerk, I'm going to explain to him just what an asshole he really is!"

Hank shook his head. Preacher, you'd better get here fast, he thought.

"Tina," he said. "I think you'd better settle down. He must have had his reasons."

"Settle down?" she screamed. "I'm going to settle down on him like a storm cloud."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," came Maggie's voice from behind them. They all turned to face her. "Like Hank said, there must be a reason."

Hank felt it before he heard it. A vibration of the air—like a tuning fork that had been struck. Then he heard it. A low rumble coming from the west.

Maggie spun around. She knew that sound, only something was different. The sound almost had an echo. She rushed forward. The silhouettes of two bikers dressed in black, with

*Eye for an Eye*

arms held high on Ape Hangers, emerged out of the heat waves coming off the road. Maggie shadowed her eyes. The one in the lead carried a huge stuffed animal. They rushed forward.

Preacher saw the crowd around the tree. He looked over at the Kid. He nodded. Both bikes shot forward as they rolled back their throttles. They shot past the tree only to slow down on compression. They turned around. The old girl answered his call when Preacher turned her loose. He did a burnout up to the station. The Kid followed suit.

Everybody stood still.

Preacher shut the old girl down. With a leather-gloved hand, Preacher took off his glasses. He looked up at Maggie. "Am I too late for the party?"

Maggie smiled with tears streaming down her face. She took her stance. "Baby, you are my party."

The crowd erupted in applause.

\* \* \* \* \*

The party started to break up as the golden sun lowered into the western sky. Some of the older participants had left earlier. Roy, Tina, Josh, Hank, and Maggie started to clean up as the crowd retired to their homes. Preacher and the Kid had been welcomed as if they were family.

"Kid," Maggie hollered, "would you help Roy with the tables?"

The Kid pulled the last delicious morsel of chicken off a drumstick before he nodded. "Sure," he said.

The Kid had wondered about whom these people were when they all had converged on Preacher and Maggie. Preacher hadn't even cleared his bike before the redhead leaped into his arms.

Pure chaos erupted the moment he lowered her to her feet. Everybody shook Preacher's hand; some patted his back. The women embraced him. Preacher had helped these people. The story was told to him over and over about how Preacher had stayed and earned money for the small boy, Josh. The Kid



Preacher returns from his road trip thinking he has found his purpose. Life, however, does not cooperate. He can not find that one person that needs his help. It takes a crime against society to show him his true path. Also see Preacher: Do Unto Others and Preacher: Thou Shall Not Lie.

Preacher: Eye For An Eye

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